

TRIUMPH OF THE ECONOMIC VIRTUES
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" The very genius of that nation of people,¹¹ wrote Straiford to Laud of the Puritans, " leads them always to oppose, as well civilly as ecclesiastically, all that ever authority ordains for them." ¹⁵ Against this whole attempt to convert economic activity into an instrument of profit for the Government and its hangers-on—against, no less, the spasmodic attempts of the State to protect peasants against landlords, craftsmen against merchants, and consumers against middlemen—the interests which it thwarted and curbed revolted with increasing pertinacity. Questions of taxation, on which attention has usually been concentrated, were in reality merely one element in a quarrel, which had its deeper cause in the collision of incompatible social philosophies. The Puritan tradesman had seen his business ruined by a monopoly granted to a needy courtier, and cursed Laud and his Popish soap. The Puritan goldsmith or financier had found his trade, as a bullion-broker hampered by the re-establishment of the ancient office of Royal Exchanger, and secured a resolution from the House of Commons, declaring that the patent vesting it in Lord Holland, and the proclamation forbidding the exchanging of gold and silver by unauthorized persons, were a grievance. The Puritan money-lender had been punished by the Court of High Commission,

and railed
at the interference of bishops in temporal
affairs. The
Puritan clothier, who had suffered many
things at the
hands of interfering busy-bodies despatched
from White-
hall to teach him his business, averted
discreet eyes
when the Wiltshire workmen threw a more
than usually
obnoxious Royal Commissioner into the
Avon, and,
when the Civil War came, rallied to the
Parliament*
The Puritan country gentleman had been
harried by
Depopulation Commissions, and took his
revenge with
the meeting of the Long Parliament. The
Puritan
merchant had seen the Crown both squeeze
money out
of his company, and threaten its monopoly by
encourag-
ing courtly interlopers to infringe its
charter. The